



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
Sept. 16, 2007

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### **Governor Hoeven Proclaims Suicide Prevention Month in North Dakota**

BISMARCK, N.D. – Governor John Hoeven has proclaimed September as Suicide Prevention Month in North Dakota.

According to the North Dakota Department of Health, suicide is the second leading cause of death among North Dakotans ages 15 to 24 and the ninth leading cause of death overall. It is the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death among Americans. In 2007, 93 North Dakotans died as a result of suicide.

Suicide affects everyone, but some groups are at higher risk than others. Men are four times more likely than women to die from suicide. However, three times more women than men report attempting suicide.

“Knowing the risk factors and warning signs for suicide may save a life,” said Gail Erickson, Suicide Prevention director for the Department of Health. “It’s important to realize, however, that not everyone who displays these warning signs will attempt suicide.”

Risk factors for suicide include, but are not limited to:

- Previous suicide attempt(s).
- History of depression or other mental illness.
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- Family history of suicide or violence.
- Physical illness.
- Feeling alone.

“Unfortunately, someone dies as a result of suicide every 16 minutes in the United States,” said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. “About 5 million Americans have lost a loved one to suicide in the last 25 years. That’s why it’s important for all of us to recognize the warning signs and reach out to people who are having difficulty coping.”

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The warning signs of suicide can include:

- Changes in a person's mood, diet or sleeping pattern.
- Increased alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawal from friends, family and society.
- Rage or uncontrolled anger.
- Reckless behavior.

Some of the ways to be helpful to someone who is threatening suicide include:

- Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be nonjudgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or whether feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Don't dare him or her to do it.
- Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
- Take action. Remove lethal means, such as guns or stockpiled pills.
- Get help from someone specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention. In North Dakota, help is available by calling **2-1-1**, a free and confidential 24/7 information, referral and crisis management services program.

The North Dakota Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention raises funds for scientific research, education and treatment programs, as well as programs to support those who have lost loved ones to suicide. This year, three "Out of the Darkness" Community Walks are scheduled in North Dakota to raise funds for suicide prevention and awareness. The event was held in Williston on September 14. It will be held in Fargo September 28 starting at 2 p.m. at the Island Park Gazebo and in Bismarck October 5 starting at 3:30 p.m. at the west side of the State Capitol Building.

The North Dakota Department of Health, Mental Health America of North Dakota, and the North Dakota Department of Human Services are partnering with local organizations and tribal agencies to address suicide prevention through the North Dakota Suicide Prevention Coalition.

For more information, contact Gail Erickson, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4580.

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*Please note: Proclamation follows.*

**Proclamation  
SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH  
September 2008**

**WHEREAS**, suicide is the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the United States and the third leading cause of death among people age 15 to 24; and

**WHEREAS**, in the United States, one person commits suicide every 16 minutes; and

**WHEREAS**, it is estimated that 5 million Americans have lost a loved one to suicide; and

**WHEREAS**, suicide is the ninth leading cause of death in North Dakota and the second leading cause of death among North Dakotans age 15 to 24; and

**WHEREAS**, agencies and individuals across North Dakota are working to prevent suicide; and

**WHEREAS**, all North Dakotans are encouraged to learn the warning signs of suicide and to get appropriate help for themselves and their family members who are at risk.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, as the Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim September 2008, **SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH** in the state of North Dakota.

John Hoeven  
Governor

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